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Headline news for busy
church editors

July 1996

Here is the Good News of the United Church of Christ, especially edited for congregational publications, with topical news of the wider church, helpful hints to strengthen members' faith and pride in the denomination and personal testimonies to stir the spirit. Each story is short and complete and can stand alone, ready to drop into the weekly bulletin or the monthly newsletter. The code at the end of some entries refers interested readers to a more comprehensive story in *United Church News*.

NO SPECIAL OFFERINGS? - When the church treasurer resigned, the local grain elevator manager stepped in but with the proviso that for a year he would file no report and brook no questions about church finances. Members agreed. They knew him to be honest. Imagine their surprise when at the end of the year the church's \$25,000 building indebtedness had been wiped out, and the treasury showed a balance of \$12,000? "How did you do it?" everyone wanted to know.

"Most of you bring your grain to my elevator," he replied. "When I paid you, I simply with-held ten percent on your behalf and gave it to the church in your name. You never missed it."

- Thanks to *First Congregational UCC*,
Wadena, Minn.

NO TO INDIAN JOE - The UCC Council for American Indian Ministry is mounting a protest petition against a string of Minnesota smoke shops named Indian Joe's, whose logo is a Native American in head dress smoking a cigarette.

"It conveys and exploits a very negative image caricature of American Indian persons," explains Council leader Armin Schmidt.

UCC RESPONDS TO CHURCH BURNINGS - The charred remains of St. Johns Baptist Church, Dixiana, S.C., were still smoking as Mac Charles Jones of the National Council of Churches stared at the rubble.

The U.S. is facing an epidemic of black church burnings, mostly in the rural South. Since 1989, 75 have been torched. Racist or copycat arsonists, nobody knows, but Americans now are responding with their dollars to help rebuild.

Church World Service, the relief arm of the National Council of Churches, is asking for \$1 million. The United Church Board for World Ministries immediately donated \$5,000. Later, the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries contributed \$50,000. Its Office for Global Sharing has sent a six-minute video, "The Burning of Black Churches 1996," to every conference while asking the UCC family to support the cause. Checks should be sent to the conference designated "Rebuild the Burned Churches."

At its annual meeting, the New Hampshire Conference set a goal of \$20,000, while the Minnesota Conference asked its members to visit a black congregation and volunteer to help rebuild torched churches. The Massachusetts Conference took up a collection at its annual meeting and raised more than \$1,700. In a news release, the Rev. Paul H. Sherry, said "An outcry by all people of faith is needed now, lest people as well as buildings become targets of these ugly and violent attacks."

WHAT PRICE GAMBLING? - Gambling is big business. Forty-two states now allow some form of games of chance. In 1994, legalized gambling took in \$482 billion. Now, thoughtful citizens are beginning to question the impact of gambling on people and the economy. Congress is considering such a study which, of course, is opposed by the industry. Favoring the "Gambling Impact and Policy Commission Act" is the UCC's Office for Church in Society. In a policy statement, OCIS' board of directors offers four moral objections to state supported gambling:

- It is an improper function of government to encourage people to gamble.
- It is a regressive form of taxation, drawing money disproportionately from the poor.
- Gambling is addictive.
- With so much money at stake, politicians are vulnerable to corruption.

The OCIS action calls for separate consideration of gaming on Indian reservations, "out of support for Native American self-determination." "The Indians must resolve the issue themselves," says the Rev. Jay Lintner, head of OCIS' Washington office.

MAY I QUOTE YOU? –

How odd to God
 To choose the Jews.
 But not so odd
 As those who choose
 A Jewish God
 Yet scorn the Jews.

– attributed to Benjamin Disraeli, *Britain's first and only Jewish Prime Minister* (1868; 1874-80)

DON'T COPY – RIGHT? – Excuse me, sir. Yes, you with that piece of music in the copier. If you were thinking of making copies, don't.

That material is copyrighted and you are breaking the law if you make copies without the permission of the owner.

Just one little copy? Yes, just one little copy.

- There's an ethical issue here, too.

"Authors and other creative people have the right to reproduce their work, display their work, perform their work and offer it for distribution," points out Mary Sicher, Pennsylvania Southeast Conference's resource center coordinator.

Copiers deprive an artist of income and may discourage other's creativity. Copyright law applies to using as well as duplicating, such as a play or musical or movie.

For information on copyright law contact Mary Sicher at 610/539-3369.

– Thanks to *Communitas*, published by the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference

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CONNECTING YOUTH AND ADULTS – In a *Doonsbury* episode, Mike tells his daughter, Alex, that it's time for the family to go to church together. Alex resists, insisting church is "boring."

Maybe church wouldn't be so boring (to some) if adults and youth worked together in a partnership.

For starters, *youth*: Don't be afraid to speak up and invite adults to share skills, experiences and resources. Once committed to a job, take the time and energy to do the work and take responsibility seriously. Of course, involve friends, but don't assume all adults are going to treat teens the way their parents do.

Adults: Reach out to youth by sharing in some of the decision-making that effects their lives. Listen to the kids and learn from them. Support them with information and training. Invite them to meetings, make them feel welcome, and don't blame all youngsters for the actions of one.

– Adapted from *Courage in the Struggle*, published by the UCC Office for Church in Society

MUSIC FOR THE FEW – The *United Church of Cloverdale (Calif.)* has 170 members and averages about 85 for worship. But it has five choirs, three of them youth.

"When all of them sing together," laughs Janice Timm, minister of music, "I wonder who's left in the congregation to listen."

What's the secret of her success? Timm says summer is the time to think choirs, a first one or a new one. Look for a choral workshop run by a local high school or college, she advises.

"It's a wonderful way to network and learn from others," she says.

Next, decide on one specific age group.

Even if there is already a choir, "a new group eliminates the history of the other group," she says.

For music, Timm recommends traditional composers like Bach and Handel with maybe some gospel hymns.

A focus event like a Christmas musical is the best way to hold kids' interest, says Timm.

"They know they are participating in a team effort and will be appreciated by the congregation for their hard work. Young people like a beginning, middle and end," she says.

A must for budding music directors is membership in the Choristers Guild and, if you have a computer, joining several online Internet meetings on church choral music. Timm is happy to share advice. Her e-mail address is JTIMM@ZAPCOM.NET; voice mail, 707/894-2039.

– This story freely adapted from *A cappella*, a newsletter for the UCC musicians network, published by the UC Board for Homeland Ministries

OH NO! – A \$1 bill and a \$20 bill ended up in a man's wallet and got to talking about where each had been.

"I've been to New York to purchase a ticket for a Broadway show," boasted the \$20 bill. "Then I went to Vegas and was used at a Black Jack table. I've been to L.A. to get into Disneyland. I've been to San Francisco as a tip in a Chinatown restaurant. And now, I'm going to Atlanta for the Olympic Games. Where have you been?"

"To church. To church. To church," replied the \$1 bill.